

Battering

Battering is a pattern of behavior used to establish power and control over another person through fear and intimidation, often including the threat or use of violence. Battering happens when one person believes they are entitled to control another. Assault, battering and domestic violence are crimes.

Definitions: Abuse of family members can take many forms. Battering may include emotional abuse, economic abuse, sexual abuse, using children, threats, using male privilege, intimidation, isolation, and a variety of other behaviors used to maintain fear, intimidation and power. In all cultures, the perpetrators are most commonly the men of the family. Women are most commonly the victims of violence. Elder and child abuse are also prevalent. Acts of domestic violence generally fall into one or more of the following categories:

- **Physical Battering** - The abuser's physical attacks or aggressive behavior can range from bruising to murder. It often begins with what is excused as trivial contacts which escalate into more frequent and serious attacks.
- **Sexual Abuse** - Physical attack by the abuser is often accompanied by, or culminates in, sexual violence wherein the woman is forced to have sexual intercourse with her abuser or take part in unwanted sexual activity.
- **Psychological Battering** - The abuser's psychological or mental violence can include constant verbal abuse, harassment, excessive possessiveness, isolating the woman from friends and family, deprivation of physical and economic resources, and destruction of personal property.

Battering escalates. It often begins with behaviors like threats, name calling, violence in her presence (such as punching a fist through a wall), and/or damage to objects or pets. It may escalate to restraining, pushing, slapping, and/or pinching. The battering may include punching, kicking, biting, sexual assault, tripping, throwing. Finally, it may become life-threatening with serious behaviors such as choking, breaking bones, or the use of weapons.

Why Do Men Batter Women?

Many theories have been developed to explain why some men use violence against their partners. These theories include: family dysfunction, inadequate communication skills, provocation by women, stress, chemical dependency, lack of spirituality and economic hardship. These issues may be associated with battering of women, but they are not the causes. Removing these associated factors will not end men's violence against women. The batterer begins and continues his behavior because violence is an effective method for gaining and keeping control over another person and he usually does not suffer adverse consequences as a result of his behavior.

Historically, violence against women has not been treated as a "real" crime. This is evident in the lack of severe consequences, such as incarceration or economic penalties, for men guilty of battering their partners. Rarely are batterers ostracized in their communities, even if they are known to have physically assaulted their partners. Batterers come from all groups and backgrounds, and from all personality profiles. However, some characteristics fit a general profile of a batterer:

- A batterer objectifies women. He does not see women as people. He does not respect women as a group. Overall, he sees women as property or sexual objects.

Source: National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

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- A batterer has low self-esteem and feels powerless and ineffective in the world. He may appear successful, but inside he feels inadequate.
- A batterer externalizes the causes of his behavior. He blames his violence on circumstances such as stress, his partner's behavior, a "bad day," alcohol or other factors.
- A batterer may be pleasant and charming between periods of violence, and is often seen as a "nice guy" to outsiders.
- Some behavioral warning signs of a potential batterer include extreme jealousy, possessiveness, a bad temper, unpredictability, cruelty to animals and verbal abusiveness.

Why Do Women Stay?

All too often the question "Why do women stay in violent relationships?" is answered with a victim blaming attitude. Women victims of abuse often hear that they must like or need such treatment, or they would leave. Others may be told that they are one of the many "women who love too much" or who have "low self-esteem." The truth is that no one enjoys being beaten, no matter what their emotional state or self image. A woman's reasons for staying are more complex than a statement about her strength of character. In many cases it is dangerous for a woman to leave her abuser. If the abuser has all of the economic and social status, leaving can cause additional problems for the woman. Leaving could mean living in fear and losing child custody, losing financial support, and experiencing harassment at work.

Although there is no profile of the women who will be battered, there is a well documented syndrome of what happens once the battering starts. Battered women experience shame, embarrassment and isolation. A woman may not leave battering immediately because:

- She realistically fears that the batterer will become more violent and maybe even fatal if she attempts to leave;
- Her friends and family may not support her leaving;
- She knows the difficulties of single parenting in reduced financial circumstances;
- There is a mix of good times, love and hope along with the manipulation, intimidation and fear;
- She may not know about or have access to safety and support.

Look over the following questions. Think about how you are being treated and how you treat your partner. Remember, when one person scares, hurts or continually puts down the other person, it's abuse.

Does your partner...

- ☐ Embarrass or make fun of you in front of your friends or family?
- ☐ Put down your accomplishments or goals?
- ☐ Make you feel like you are unable to make decisions?
- ☐ Use intimidation or threats to gain compliance?
- ☐ Tell you that you are nothing without them?
- ☐ Treat you roughly - grab, push, pinch, shove or hit you?
- ☐ Call you several times a night or show up to make sure you are where you said you would be?
- ☐ Use drugs or alcohol as an excuse for saying hurtful things or abusing you?
- ☐ Blame you for how they feel or act?
- ☐ Pressure you sexually for things you aren't ready for?
- ☐ Make you feel like there "is no way out" of the relationship?
- ☐ Prevent you from doing things you want - like spending time with your friends or family?
- ☐ Try to keep you from leaving after a fight or leave you somewhere after a fight to "teach you a lesson"?

Resources for Additional Information

Missouri Coalition Against Domestic Violence
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

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